

Develop partnerships based on an alignment of goals, strong collaboration, and consistent communication

Programs that have developed strong and lasting partnerships have done so by identifying shared goals and seeking ways in which programs and partners can mutually benefit by advancing each other's missions. Even if partners don't have the same goals as your program, you can still try to find ways to work together that improve the success of both efforts. Several programs have established forums for regular communication with partners, such as a steering committee or stakeholder group that meets monthly or quarterly, to maintain collaboration and communication. Informal events—such as engaging with partners after hours in a social setting—have proven to be successful at building trust and camaraderie. One key lesson from programs that have established robust partnerships: remember that partnership development often takes more time than planned. Explore this [Partnerships Toolkit](#) [1] by the Better Buildings Residential Network for more on partnership development and stakeholder mapping.

- The [Better Buildings Program San Jose](#) [2] leveraged local, well-known organizations that delivered non-energy services to low-income residents to help the program reach interested homeowners. Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and the local Boys and Girls Clubhouse offered the program space for events where they could meet with homeowners, teach them more about the program, and schedule home energy assessments. To help low-income residents cover the cost of home energy evaluations and upgrades, the program also created a partnership with Pacific Gas and Electric's Moderate Income Direct Install program (which offered free home energy assessments and weatherization services to income-qualified residents) to allow all program customers into the utility's program. To learn more about the Better Buildings Program in San Jose, see the case study ["San Jose, California, Partners with Established Community Groups to Win over Homeowners"](#) [3].
- Early in its program, [EnergyWorks](#) [4] in Philadelphia established a partnership with its local gas utility, Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW), to share lessons learned and customer information, including sharing energy use data once customers authorized its release. This partnership helped PGW enhance its own energy efficiency programs by applying the knowledge learned about home energy upgrades from EnergyWorks. The partnership also provided PGW customers with access to EnergyWorks' loan program. For EnergyWorks, the partnership gave it access to PGW customers for marketing. Learn more about the partnership from the case study ["In the City of Brotherly Love, Sharing Know-How Leads to Sustainability"](#) [5]. EnergyWorks found that by the end of their Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grant period, they had identified a successful formula of marketing, outreach, and contractor interface. They wanted their lessons learned to be useful in the future continued working with the city-owned utility, Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) to develop a new [utility-run energy efficiency program](#) [6]. This program built off and mirrored the design of the EnergyWorks program by incentivizing comprehensive, whole-home residential energy efficiency projects. EnergyWorks' role changed to providing training and acting as a general contractor, which gave it more flexibility. PGW was able to provide bigger incentives than EnergyWorks could. In addition, PGW benefited from increased customer satisfaction by offering the program, so the program evolution and partnership was a win-win for everyone involved. For more information, see the U.S. Department of Energy's [Focus Series Interview with Philadelphia Energy Works](#) [5].
- [Michigan Saves](#) [7], formerly BetterBuildings for Michigan, established a partnership with Grand Valley State University (GVSU) to take the program's community-based approach to a new type of community—university staff—through a semester-long, employer-assisted initiative. The program found that the sustainability staff members at GVSU were interested in the program, and program staff described a "sustainability ethic ingrained in the school's culture." GVSU employees were receptive to the energy efficiency message. University leadership joined in as well, with the provost's office and university president writing letters to staff in support of the program. The school's human resources department helped the program develop a database to manage services to employees. As a result of the program, 215 people working for GVSU (nearly 10% of total employees) signed up for the program. By going through the university, these sign-ups cost one-fourth to one-third of the program's normal marketing cost per person. Sixty percent of the homeowners who participated in the GVSU program undertook home upgrades, which was higher than Michigan Saves' average rate of 44%. To learn more about the effort, see the interview with program leads: ["It's Academic: BetterBuildings for Michigan Partners With University to Reach Employees"](#) [8].

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Source URL: <https://rpsec.energy.gov/tips-for-success/develop-partnerships-based-alignment-goals-strong-collaboration-and-consistent>

Links

- [1] http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/11/f19/residential_network_partnerships_toolkit.pdf
- [2] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/san-jose-california>
- [3] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/san-jose-california-partners-established-community-groups>
- [4] <http://www.energyworksnow.com/>
- [5] http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/focus_series_energy_works_info_sharing_11-1-13.pdf
- [6] <http://www.pgwennergysense.com/>
- [7] <http://michigansaves.org/program/bbfm>
- [8] http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/gvsu_interview_formatted_1-28-13.pdf